

VZCZCXR05977
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHDS #1016/01 0951246
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 051246Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5453
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIA/CJTF HOA PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER
CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAID EAGR ET

SUBJECT: REPRESENTATIVE MCGOVERN MEETS PM TO DISCUSS FOOD
AID AND SAFETY NET PROGRAM

Summary

¶1. In response to Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles' concern for the urban poor, Representative James McGovern (Massachusetts) explained to the Prime Minister that the Embassy and USAID could advocate for more food aid for the urban poor by arguing that it is an emergency food need. The Congressman said he would advocate for Ethiopia back in Washington. He and his staff praised Ethiopia's safety net program and the dramatic progress made in meeting rural food needs. A similar program may very well be needed in the urban area, the Prime Minister said, and also noted needs in pastoral areas. The Prime Minister lamented, however, that if the safety net program had been started four or five years earlier than it was, conditions would be far better today.
End Summary.

Praising the Ethiopia Program

¶2. Representative James McGovern and his staffer Cindy Buhl and Major Gerald Thomas, along with USAID Director Glenn Anders and the Ambassador (note-taker) met with Prime Minister Meles, MFA North America Director Almaz and chief of staff Gebretensai April 2 to discuss Ethiopia's progress on food security. The Congressman remarked that after two days of traveling through the rural back-roads of Ethiopia (Butagira and Dira Dawa regions), he and his staff were impressed with the progress made under the safety net program. Professional staffer Buhl remarked that in comparison with her visit several years ago, Ethiopia has made remarkable progress in meeting food need requirements in the rural area.

¶3. The Congressman addressed the Prime Minister's concern for the urban poor. The recently approved PL-480 Title I food assistance for Ethiopia will help meet part of this need. The Prime Minister noted that while safety net programs are for the rural area, the urban area must not be overlooked. The Congressman suggested that the Embassy could recommend to Washington that there is an emergency food need in the urban area in an effort to secure more food assistance. He added that he would support Ethiopia's food assistance needs.

Prime Minister Focuses on
What Needs to be Tackled

¶4. While the Prime Minister thanked the Congressman for his remarks, Meles focused not on areas of progress but on challenges yet to be met. He lamented that, yes, the safety net program should have been initiated four to five years earlier. This would have made rural conditions much better. He added that water projects are critical to the success of food production and need to be expanded. There are many small projects operated by NGO's and private groups. The key will be to expand these small projects into full scale national programs which can help provide water for large areas.

¶5. Another area of concern to the Prime Minister centers on promoting pastoralist development. He praised the USAID pastoral initiative. Disease and parasites plague livestock severely limiting livestock production. Ethiopian sheep skin is the best in the world, but more needs to be done in expanding production. &Dipping⁸ or inoculations and disease prevention projects will help expand the quality of leather production.

¶6. The Prime Minister stated that Starbucks and the Ethiopian Government are resolving their differences over certification vs. trademark over the sale of Ethiopian coffee. He added that Starbucks was going to subcontract production of aprons to Ethiopian manufacturers which would then be sold in Starbucks' stores in the U.S. The Prime Minister noted Starbucks' contributions to enhancing the quality of coffee

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production in Ethiopia.

Comment

¶7. The Prime Minister interrupted his hosting of ministers from East Africa gathered in Addis on economic issues to meet with the Congressman. The issue of food security and the interest of the Congressman were of particular concern to the Prime Minister. Thankful for Title I food assistance, the Ethiopian Government views the amount (15,000 mt) as insufficient to meet urban needs. The Prime Minister is committed to using food reserves to help the urban poor. Opposition leaders have questioned whether this is sustainable, will adversely affect the market, and whether distribution will be centered on political supporters of the government. The opposition leaders agree with the Prime Minister and donor nations that the urban poor need help and that a closer examination of the condition of the urban poor is essential in establishing an effective safety net program, similar to the programs for the rural poor. End Comment.

¶8. Congressman McGovern cleared this message.
YAMAMOTO